

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Entry of this amendment and reconsideration of the present application, as amended, are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-47 and new claims 48-50 are presently active in this application. Claims 1-8, 10-13, 15-22, 24-26 and 28-47 are rejected. Claims 9, 14, 23 and 27 are objected to. Claims 1, 6-16, 20-29, 32-35, 38, 39 and 44-47 are amended herein. Unless an argument is made below in support of the patentability of each of these claims over a cited prior art reference in view of an amendment to the claim, the changes to the claims do not relate to patentability.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §112

Claim 47 is amended to recite that the propellant burns in a direction toward the bottom wall to thereby overcome the Examiner's rejection of the claim under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 39, 40, 42 and 43 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Martin (U.S. Pat. No. 3,606,377).

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed in view of amendments to claims 1 and 39. Specifically, claim 1 is amended to recite that the inflator module includes a coating coated on the propellant and comprising igniter material and claim 39 is amended to recite that the inflator module includes a coating coated on an upper surface of the propellant and comprising igniter material. Coating of the surface of the propellant is described in the specification, e.g., at page 23, lines 15-17. Martin does not disclose this feature.

Martin describes an inflator module including a pyrotechnic gas generating material 22 which is housed in support means 14, 42. There is no coating including igniter material on the gas generating material 22.

Since Martin does not disclose all of the features now set forth in claims 1 and 39, it cannot anticipate the embodiments of the invention set forth in these claims or in claims 2, 4, 5, 40, 42 and 43 which depend from one of these claims. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 39, 40, 42 and 43 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Martin has been overcome and should be removed.

Claims 1-4, 6, 16-20, 29 and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Cuevas (U.S. Pat. No. 5,058,921).

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed in view of amendments to claims 1, 16 and 29. The changes to claim 1 to include the feature of a coating coated on the propellant and comprising igniter material is discussed above. Claim 16 is amended to include a similar feature. Claim 29 is amended to clarify that the airbag module is arranged along the left or right side of the vehicle and that the airbag housing and propellant are oriented in the longitudinal direction of the vehicle which is defined as the direction parallel to the left and right sides of the vehicle. In this manner, the airbag deploys in a longitudinal direction of the vehicle, e.g., along the windows, to protect the occupants of the vehicle in the event of a side impact. Cuevas does not disclose these features.

Cuevas describes an inflator module 10 including a propellant block 40 which is surrounded by a wall 62. The inflator module 10 is installed within the dashboard of the vehicle (see Fig. 1).

In contrast to the embodiments of the invention set forth in claims 1 and 16, there is no coating including igniter material on the propellant block 40. In contrast to the embodiment of the invention set forth in claim 29, the airbag module is not arranged along a side of the vehicle such that the airbag housing and propellant are oriented in the longitudinal direction of the vehicle.

Since Cuevas does not disclose all of the features now set forth in independent claims 1, 16 and 29, it cannot anticipate the embodiments of the invention set forth in these claims or in claims 2-4, 6, 17-20 and 32 which depend from one of these claims. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 1-4, 6, 16-20, 29 and 32 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Cuevas has been overcome and should be removed.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 3, 6, 16-20, 29-32, 41 and 44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Cuevas.

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed on the grounds that Martin and Cuevas do not disclose, teach or suggest all of the features now set forth in the claims.

With respect to claims 3 and 6, these claims depend on claim 1 and include all of the features thereof. As discussed above, Martin and Cuevas do not disclose all of the features of claim 1 and therefore cannot be combined to arrive at the embodiments of the invention set forth in claims 3 and 6.

With respect to claims 16-20, Martin and Cuevas do not disclose a coating including igniter material on propellant, which feature is set forth in claim 16, and therefore cannot be combined to arrive at the embodiments of the invention set forth in claim 16 or in claims 19-20 which depend therefrom.

With respect to claims 29-32, Martin and Cuevas do not disclose an airbag module arranged along a side of the vehicle such that the airbag housing and propellant are oriented in the longitudinal direction of the vehicle, which feature is set forth in claim 29. Therefore, the references cannot be combined to arrive at the embodiments of the invention set forth in claim 29 or in claims 30-32 which depend therefrom.

With respect to claims 41 and 44, these claims depend on claim 39 and include all of the features thereof. Martin and Cuevas do not disclose an inflator module including a propellant and a coating coated on an upper surface thereof and comprising igniter material as set forth in claim 39. Therefore, the references cannot be combined to arrive at the embodiments of the invention set forth in claims 41 and 44 which depend from claim 39.

In view of the changes to the claims and the arguments presented above, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 3, 6, 16-20, 29-32, 41 and 44 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Cuevas has been overcome and should be removed.

Claims 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 45 and 46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Hock (U.S. Pat. No. 5,483,896).

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed on the grounds that Martin and Hock do not disclose, teach or suggest all of the features now set forth in the claims. Part of the subject matter of claims 7, 8, 10 and 11 is now set forth in claim 1 and part of the subject matter of claims 45 and 46 is now set forth in claim 39. Martin and Hock do not disclose all of the features of claims 1, 15 and 39.

Specifically, Hock does not disclose a coating comprising igniter material coated on propellant, e.g., coated on an upper surface of the propellant with the remaining surfaces of the propellant being affixed to walls of a housing. The feature of the coating comprising igniter material is now set forth in claims 1, 15 and 39.

Hock describes an inflator 10 with annular discs 22 of gas generating material which are enclosed in a bag or jacket 24 which is formed from igniter material. A portion of the bag 24 also extends through center openings 22a in the gas generating wafers 22.

In contrast to the invention, the bag 24 does not constitute a coating coated on the propellant and which includes igniter material so that a unitary structure can be formed. Rather, the bag 24 surrounds the gas generating wafers 22 but does not coat any surface thereof.

Martin is devoid of any mention of the use of an igniter material.

Since Martin and Hock do not disclose a coating coated on a propellant, one skilled in the art could not combine these references and arrive at the claimed embodiments of the invention. Furthermore,

assuming arguendo one were to combine Hock with Martin in the manner suggested by the Examiner, the bag surrounding the propellant of Martin would not be a coating in the propellant. Moreover, the propellant in Martin is supported on at least one side by non-combustible support means 14, 42. Thus, one skilled in the art would not even consider using the igniter bag of Hock in combination with Martin because the combustible bag would be placed against a non-combustible part and would also interfere with the support of the gas generating means of Martin.

In view of the changes to the claims and the arguments presented above, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 45 and 46 as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Hock has been overcome and should be removed.

Claims 12, 13, 21, 22, 24-26, 28 and 33-38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Cuevas and Hock.

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed on the grounds that Martin, Cuevas and Hock do not disclose, teach or suggest all of the features now set forth in the claims.

Each rejected claim or the independent claim from which it depends includes the feature of a coating coated on the propellant and including igniter material or the features of the airbag module being arranged along the left or right side of the vehicle and the airbag housing and propellant being oriented in the longitudinal direction of the vehicle.

Martin, Cuevas and Hock do not disclose these features and therefore cannot be combined to arrive at the embodiments of the invention set forth in the rejected claims. None of the cited references shows a coating coated on propellant or an airbag housing and propellant oriented in a longitudinal direction of the vehicle for particular use in side airbag inflation.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 12, 13, 21, 22, 24-26, 28 and 33-38 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Martin in view of Cuevas and Hock has been overcome and should be removed.

New Claims

Claims 48-50 are presented herein and constitute original claims 9, 14 and 47 rewritten in independent form. In view of the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 9, 14 and 47, claims 48-50 should be allowable over the prior art of record.

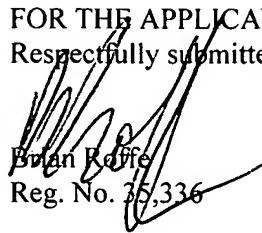
The extra claims fee of \$129 for presenting three additional independent claims in excess of three and the extra claims fee of \$27 for presenting three additional claims in excess of twenty should be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0266.

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If the Examiner should determine that minor changes to the claims to obviate informalities are necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned to discuss the same.

An early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

FOR THE APPLICANT
Respectfully submitted,


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